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## Representing

Representing allows students to make sense of their learning and to demonstrate their understanding in a variety of ways. Representing enables students to communicate information and ideas through a variety of forms including illustrations, diagrams, drama, visual art, charts, mime, models, and multimedia presentations.

While the emphasis of the language arts is on representing thoughts, ideas, and feelings in spoken and written forms, students should be encouraged to use visual, dramatic, and other media forms to support spoken and written messages. When appropriate, students should be given opportunities to communicate through a variety of forms including visuals (e.g., tables, graphs, charts, diagrams, photographs), drama (e.g., tableaux, improvisations, role play), and multimedia (e.g., video, presentation software).

Representing complements and enhances the other language arts strands. Representing, for example, enhances speaking when students support their spoken words with various materials and media, such as visuals in presentations to small groups, three-dimensional models in oral reports to the class, and props in improvisations. Representing enhances writing when students participate in activities and assignments that involve exploring and organizing ideas (e.g., webbing and outlining); dramatizing scripts and dialogues; illustrating settings, plots, and characters (e.g., story maps, Venn diagrams); producing scripts (e.g., video); and preparing advertisements (e.g., print, audio, video).

## The Representing Process

As with speaking and writing, the representing process is recursive in nature and goes through several phases – planning and focusing, designing and producing, reworking and presenting.

### Preparing to Represent (BEFORE): Planning and Focusing

As with all communication, students need to plan and focus their representations. Planning and focusing require students to identify the topic, purpose, audiences, and ideas as well as the medium. Depending on the medium, a number of factors should be kept in mind.

*In an oral presentation*, students might consider:

- Are there ideas or information that cannot be communicated in words, but can be communicated through visuals, movement, sounds, or images?

- Are there ideas or information that need to be represented both orally and visually for emphasis?
- Which kind of visual would be most effective or have the most appeal for the audience (e.g., graphics, charts, gestures, tableaux, costumes, props)?
- Does this representation clearly reflect my understanding?
- Is this representation interesting or thought-provoking?

*In a print representation*, students might consider:

- Is the message as clear, concise, and complete as possible? Is it organized in a logical manner?
- How can the reader best be drawn in and the reader's attention held? What aural, visual, or oral elements can add to the interest level and effectiveness of the representation?
- What information needs to be presented both in written and other forms for emphasis or clarity? What part of the representation could be supported by an image, a photograph, a picture, a graph, a chart, a table, a diagram, an illustration, a map, or another form?
- What headings and typeface would be best?
- What would make the representation balanced and attractive? Do the important elements stand out? Are the elements arranged to direct the eye to a focal point? Does the relative size of the elements correspond to their importance?

*In a multimedia representation*, students might consider:

- Which media are the appropriate media to reflect my understanding?
- Which media will help most to clearly present the ideas in a lively and appealing way to the intended audience? How will each serve the purpose of the representation?
- How can each medium help create a smooth and well co-ordinated representation?
- What materials, technology, or equipment are needed for developing the representation?
- Are there any unnecessary elements or distracting elements?

### Representing (DURING): Designing, Rehearsing, and Producing

Students must create a clear representation of the ideas. This requires careful consideration of all the elements and how they work together. Sometimes, this also requires organizing and sequencing the elements and creating an effective introduction, logical sequence, and strong conclusion or effective layout. For oral and multimedia representations, students often need to use a flow chart, storyboard,

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or some other graphic organizer to consider what will be seen and/or heard.

## **Post-Representing (AFTER): Reworking, Presenting, and Reflecting**

Students must review and revise their representations. They need to evaluate their representations for appeal to the intended audience and consider how well co-ordinated and effective they are. Students may need to confer and field test and make other arrangements for reflecting on the impact of the representations. Ultimately, students need to share their representations to determine if the work has the desired effect on the audience.

## **The Language Cues and Conventions in Representing**

Effective representers consider and attend to the language cues and conventions during each phase of the representing process. As students represent their understanding and communicate ideas and information, they consider and use each of the cueing systems:

- The pragmatic cues and conventions as students consider the audience and purpose and the level of language that would be appropriate.
- The textual cues and conventions as students organize ideas in an appropriate format. In addition, students need to ensure that the ideas within that format are connected using the appropriate transitional devices.
- The syntactical cues and conventions as students use sentences of varying patterns, lengths, and complexity to present the message.
- The semantic and lexical cues and conventions as students choose words and take into consideration the denotative and connotative value of those words and the effect the words have on the audience.
- The graphophonic aspects of language as students ensure stress, pitch, and juncture are clear and appropriate in any oral segments of the representation.
- The other cues and conventions that ensure the communication and presentation are effective. Layout, format, and the oral, visual, and multimedia elements and techniques require careful attention in representing.

## **Supporting the Representing Strand**

Creating effective and appropriate representations involves many strategies as well as technologies. The more students use both the linguistic and visual elements of communication in the classroom, the

more opportunity students have to learn effectively (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). Exploring and using a variety of visuals to construct knowledge, sort information, remember ideas, and communicate ideas and learning to others take time, instruction, and modelling (Heryle, 1996).

Middle Level English language arts teachers can support the representing strand by:

1. making representing a natural and integral part of each unit of study
2. modelling and discussing effective representing behaviours and strategies
3. planning lessons that ensure students achieve the outcomes for the representing strand
4. supporting and guiding students as they develop representing skills and strategies.

Each of these four points is elaborated upon in the sections that follow.

### **1. Make representing a natural and integral part of each unit.**

Middle Level students can represent their ideas using two or more media (e.g., a report accompanied by an illustration, a poem accompanied by sound and movement, a tableau accompanied by audio clips of an interview). In addition to the content and language of the representation, it is important that students consider layout (including titles, borders, backgrounds), typefaces (including size, position, and nature of the typefaces), sound (including voice, music, and sound effects), and visuals (including drama, dance, three-dimensional objects). Middle Level students can also adapt one medium to another in order to understand the conventions and techniques used in different media. Students might try their hand at adapting narratives to drama, dance, or video. Students could consider what decisions a director makes about casting a character, developing a set, creating dramatic effect, and still representing the author's original ideas.

In each unit, students deserve opportunities to explore and expand representing skills and strategies and to represent ideas in a variety of formats and media. A sample list of possible forms that might be used by Middle Level students to represent their ideas is included on page 7.

### **2. Model and discuss effective representing behaviours and strategies.**

It is important that Middle Level teachers model and discuss the purpose for representing and effective representing strategies with students. Teachers need to support and guide Middle Level students as they attempt representing tasks. Students need to

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be aware of the range of visual representations that can be used to express or support key points. In addition, students need to learn the design and production strategies associated with visual texts.

When creating a visual aid, for example, students need to consider the range of visuals that could be used:

- graphic organizers to show the relationship between ideas
- charts to provide summaries or overviews of information
- graphs and timelines to present numerical information
- diagrams to show the parts of an object or a process
- pictures, photographs, and illustrations to capture a character or event or to demonstrate a process or product
- video clips to portray an event or process.

As well, students need to consider the design elements (e.g., sizes, styles, and types of fonts, titling, labelling/captioning, layout, and colouring) that serve particular purposes and result in clear and effective visuals. As students learn about the different elements and techniques, teachers need to take time to model them and establish guidelines for using and displaying visual information. For example,

- Does it serve a real purpose?
- Does it fit with the presentation?
- Is it attention-grabbing or does it hold the audience's attention?
- Is it clear, simple, and neat?
- Does it enhance (rather than detract from) the overall representation?

Teachers can help students create visual representations of what students are learning. Visual representations not only help the audiences but also help students understand and remember what students are learning. Middle Level students can create meaning through multiple visual organizers. For example, students might use:

- concept webs or mind maps
- concept maps (which are hierarchical)
- graphic organizers (e.g., fishbone, Venn diagram)
- structured overviews
- decision-making frameworks
- outlines
- paragraph frames
- story maps
- strategy maps
- character maps
- comparison/contrast grids

- criteria matrixes
- word maps.

Storyboards are particularly useful for planning and “envisioning” a drama, dance, or video representation. The traditional storyboard is drawn in panels that include a frame for a rough sketch of the shot or picture accompanied by notes on the type of shot (e.g., L.S. [long shot], M.S. [medium shot], C.U. [close-up]) and the angle). Suggestions are made for the soundtrack (e.g., dialogue, music, and sound effects) to accompany the shot and the length of the shot. A variation of the traditional storyboard is planning the shot on a large index card using the following format (Thomas, 1988, p. 5):

- Video, drama, or dance: Sketch the shot.
- Audio: Write any narration or dialogue and identify the background music or sound effects.
- Special Instructions: Note any directions for the video (e.g., dissolve) or for the audio (e.g., fade).

### Key Questions When Representing

Middle Level students can learn to ask key questions such as the following before, during, and after representing.

#### *Some Questions for Students to Consider Before Representing.*

Do I:

- consider why I am going to communicate [purpose] (to inform, to persuade, to entertain) and to whom [audience]
- think about what I want to represent
- generate and discover ideas for the representation (brainstorming, webbing, observing, interviewing, discussing, research, reading, listening, viewing, and recording)
- consider which medium/media (oral, written, visual, multimedia) and form (e.g. pamphlet, tableau, sculpture or model, chart or table, dance, photograph, billboard, drawing, video) will best help me represent my ideas
- consider how I am going to organize and represent my ideas
- consider the technology and equipment I need for my representation
- consider the elements of visual design?

#### *Some Questions for Students to Consider During Representing.*

Do I:

- focus and script/storyboard/rehearse/try out my ideas in the chosen format
- revise and assess for appeal to my intended audience

- consider how to create a clear, effective, well coordinated representation
- consider the ethics of what is being represented?

*Some Questions for Students to Consider After Representing.*

Do I:

- confer and field test
- consider feedback
- consider how I can improve
- make arrangements for sharing the representation?

### **3. Plan lessons that ensure students achieve the outcomes for the representing strand.**

In order to give students a clear reason for representing, teachers must prepare meaningful and adequate **prompts** for representing activities. Whenever possible, ensure that these prompts include the RAFTS (Role, Audience, Format, Topic, and Strong Verb (Purpose)) variables (Adler & Vendeventer, 1989).

**R (Role):** Who am I? What is my role?

**A (Audience):** To whom am I representing my understanding? Should I use a formal or informal stance?

**F (Format):** Which format should I use for representation?

**T (Topic):** What is the topic? Is it sufficiently focused?

**S (Strong Verb) (purpose):** What am I trying to do in this representation (e.g., convince, request, prove, complain, persuade, pretend, entertain)?

For example, “You are an advertising executive. Your job is to create a brochure based on a major character that you have encountered in this unit. Imagine that the character or individual is running for a political office. Create the brochure to introduce this candidate to his or her constituency and sell his or her basic vision for the world.”

#### Mini-lessons

In addition to the Sample Lesson Planning Guide for Representing on page 8, Middle Level teachers need to consider mini-lessons that introduce students to a range of visual and graphic aids to use in representation as well as the strategies required to move through the representing process. Teachers need to consider what the students require to be successful, and plan and teach the necessary mini-lessons.

Some useful mini-lessons for the Pre-designing and Planning (Before) Representing Phase include:

- gathering ideas by brainstorming, thinking and reflecting, talking and remembering, jotting ideas and drawing, and reading and researching
- observing and viewing
- asking 5Ws + H
- constructing thought webs and graphic organizers
- interviewing
- viewing other products
- considering purpose, audience, point of view, and format
- considering current understanding to be represented
- considering the medium/media
- planning and organizing by outlining and flowcharting
- mapping and diagramming
- constructing story frames.

Some useful mini-lessons for the Drafting and Designing (During) Representing Phase include:

- composing
- arranging
- experimenting with different layouts
- scripting
- storyboarding
- filming
- using various representing forms such as drama, dance, or music.

Some useful mini-lessons for the Producing, Presenting, and Reflecting (After) Representing Phase include:

- reviewing and reshaping
- seeking others’ responses to clarify and rework
- editing
- field testing
- presenting
- marketing
- displaying
- showing
- critically analyzing.

### **4. Support and guide students as they develop representing skills and strategies.**

As with speaking and writing, helping Middle Level students understand the phases of the process helps them tackle the task in a manageable manner. Focusing on the message and the process initially can help students produce an effective product.

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## A Sample Representing Task Sheet

**Prompt:** Prepare a presentation with your computer that involves graphics, video, and sound (or develop a representation that involves drama, movement, and music). Explain to your village/town/city/reserve council your view of the water quality issues facing your community.

### Pre-Designing/Planning Your Presentation

- Decide on your purpose and audience.
- Decide on your main message.
- Think again about your audience. To get your message across, you need to include only what your audience needs to know. You need to use graphics, video, sound, language, or movement that will appeal to your audience and, at the same time, be appropriate to your purpose.
- Think about the conditions under which your audience will experience your representation. How much time will your audience need to listen, read, or view your representation? Where will it be shared and what equipment do you need?
- Identify the key points in the sequence you think should be represented.

**Your Introduction:** How will you gain the attention of your audience, make your main point clear, and lead into the body of your representation?

- Visual Text (graphics, text box, slides/visuals, tableaux, gestures, movement)
- Audio Text (spoken or recorded, accompanied by music or sound effects or not)

**The Body of Your Representation:** How will you present your key points, and how will you move effectively and smoothly from one point to the next?

- Point 1 (Sketch your visual and audio text. Think carefully about the visuals that will appeal to your audience and support your point. Also think carefully about the written and spoken language that would be appropriate to your audience.)
- Point 2 ...
- Point 3 ...
- Point 4 ...

**Conclusion:** How will you leave a strong, positive effect and remind your audience of the purpose of your representation?

- When you feel that you have planned your representation so that all the elements work together, begin preparing your software presentation or your dramatic representation with movement and music.

## Designing/Preparing/Producing Your Representation

- Using your computer and the software available to you, create your presentation or develop your dramatic representation with movement and music pieces.

### Revising/Editing/Presenting/Reflecting on Your Representation

- Review and rehearse. Will each segment of your representation focus and hold your audience's attention? Will each segment help your audience understand your ideas and why they are important? Be sure that the content of each segment is clear and to the point and serves a purpose. Be sure that the amount of information, both visual and verbal, does not overwhelm your audience. Be sure your representation is clearly audible and visible. Be sure you know how to operate the equipment and navigate through your representation. Do you have a backup plan if the equipment malfunctions?
- Prepare your final product.
- Present your software presentation or dramatic representation. Invite feedback.
- Evaluate your representation. Did you fulfill your purpose and create the desired effect in your audience?

Middle Level teachers need to help students understand the advantages and disadvantages of using technology to represent understanding and communicate messages. Students might make a computer-enhanced representation using commercial software programs. Students can also communicate online. Online communication requires well-organized thoughts, key or concise messages, clear and compelling images, and convenient ways to retrieve and link information. Students must work with words, symbols, sounds, colours, and sequence or placement to communicate clearly and concisely online. In addition to their purpose and audience, students need to consider:

- providing easy access for the reader/viewer
- developing the design or aesthetic experience using colours, typefaces, movement, images, spacing, proportion, sound, and continuity appropriate to purpose and audience
- adding links and anchors
- avoiding technical glitches.

### Other Useful Representing Strategies

Talking Drawings (Wood, 2001) and Sketch to Stretch (Harste, Short, & Burke, 1988) help students visualize complex ideas by creating "talking" drawings or sketches. In small groups or as a class, students view, listen to, or read a text. Before they begin, they think about the topic of the text and

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about how one could “represent” or “draw” something about that topic. During and after viewing, listening to, or reading the text, they sketch a picture to show what they have learned. Using techniques such as “speech balloons” and “thinking bubbles,” for example, students incorporate what characters said or were thinking. The drawing or sketch should represent or “speak to” the key ideas presented in the oral or print text. Students share their sketches with a partner and then add to the original after sharing.

Using a Read/View/Listen, Talk, Act, Draw, Write (Cox, 1999) strategy, students are to (1) talk, (2) act, (3) draw, and then (4) write during and after viewing, listening to, or reading a text. During the talking, they highlight their individual responses and equations related to the text. Students build on their oral responses and insights from other students by dramatizing or representing key ideas or scenes using props, puppets, or mime. Students then present their insights and understanding by drawing (e.g., a bird's-eye view of a scene) and finally by writing or making notes on what was learned.

It is important that students have many and varied opportunities to represent understanding of what students view, listen to, and read.

## Possible Representing Forms: A Sample Planning Chart

Possible Representing Experiences (Forms)	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6 (optional)
Advertisement						
Bar graph						
Brainstorm web						
Cartoon						
CD-ROM						
Character map						
Chart						
Collage						
Comic strip						
Comparison/ Contrast grid						
Computer-enhanced concept map						
Cycle/wheel						
Dance sequence						
Diagram						
Diorama						
Dramatization						
Display						
Flow chart						
Frame						
Graph						
Illustration						
Ladder						
Logo						
Magazine						
Mime						
Model						
Multimedia presentation						
Mural						
Music piece						
Newspaper						
Painting						
Pamphlet						
Photo essay						
Pictograph						
Poster						
Promotional video						
Puppet						
Sculpture						
Sequence chain						
Simulation						
Sketch						
Storyboard						
Story map						
Strategy chart						
Summary chart						
Tableaux						
Television presentation						
Timeline						
Tree diagram						
Venn diagram						
Video						

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## Sample Lesson Planning Guide for Representing

**Outcome(s):** (What will students learn and be able to do as a result of this activity?)

**Assessment and Evaluation:** (What evidence will demonstrate that students have achieved the outcome(s)? What criteria and guidelines will help students know what is expected in the representation?)

**Prompt:** (What is the task? What is the purpose? What is the prompt? Is it clearly stated?)

**Focusing and Planning:** (What do students already know and do as representers? What activities will help the students generate ideas for the representations? What activities will help students focus on the task and formulate a plan? What mini-lesson(s) might be needed for students to succeed?)

**Creating:** (What strategies can students use to prepare their representations? What specific activities or guidelines will help students in their creative problem solving? How can students reshape their work to achieve their purpose? What special effects or techniques [e.g., colour, light, camera techniques, movement, music, sound effects, voice] will be used?)

**Reflection and Self-assessment:** (What do students not know or do as representers? What specific activities or guidelines will help students to consider their impact on the audience? How will students consider feedback and assess themselves? What and how can students improve?)



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## Sample Teacher Checklist to Support Representing

1. Do I model effective representing skills to extend and complement students' speaking and writing skills and strategies?
  - ☐ share examples of various forms of representation and discuss potential impact
  - ☐ model and discuss different forms of representation (oral, visual, dramatic, print, and multimedia)
2. Do I help students represent their ideas in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes and audiences?
  - ☐ graphic organizers, webs, maps, frames, charts, storyboards
  - ☐ diagrams, pictures, posters, photographs, illustrations, collages, comic strips
  - ☐ audio clips, sound effects, music
  - ☐ gestures, movement, dance
  - ☐ dramatizations, mimes, pantomimes, puppetry, tableaux
  - ☐ displays, sculptures, mobiles, dioramas
  - ☐ video clips, multimedia presentations, slideshow presentations
3. Do I use mini-lessons to instruct students in using appropriate non-verbal aids and visual images to enhance spoken and written communication?
  - ☐ analyze what individuals and groups of students need to know and build on what they already know
  - ☐ provide direct instruction and model a range of representing strategies
  - ☐ provide instruction and scaffolds to help students use new forms of representation
4. Do I provide opportunities for students to use representing in a variety of situations and for a variety of purposes?
  - ☐ encourage students to include print (e.g., charts, graphs, tables)
  - ☐ encourage students to include visuals (e.g., diagrams, photos, paintings)
  - ☐ encourage students to use drama (e.g., tableaux, improvisations, role playing)
  - ☐ encourage students to use sound (e.g., music, sound effects)
  - ☐ encourage students to use movement (e.g., gestures, dance)
  - ☐ encourage students to use multimedia (e.g., CD-ROMs, videos, computer-generated graphics)
  - ☐ encourage students to create models (e.g., sculptures, dioramas, mobiles)
5. Do I provide students with, and help them to use, a variety of materials and tools to assist students in representing?
  - ☐ encourage students to experiment with new media
  - ☐ design activities for students to use new and varied media
  - ☐ provide a variety of materials and tools for students to access
6. Do I involve students in assessing their representing skills and strategies?
  - ☐ identify students' strengths and needs in their representations and discuss with students
  - ☐ consider peer, teacher, and self-assessments
  - ☐ use student created checklists, rubrics, and rating scales
  - ☐ involve students in determining criteria for assessing representations